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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fifteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 18 October 2010 from the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations presents its compliments to the General Assembly Affairs Branch of the United Nations Secretariat and has the honour to inform it that the Government of Chile has presented its candidature for re-election to the Human Rights Council for the term 2011-2014, at the elections to be held in New York in May 2011.

In that regard, the Permanent Mission has the honour to transmit herewith, an aide-memoire containing the voluntary pledges and commitments of Chile, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 (see annex).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 18 October 2010 from the Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

[Original: English, French and Spanish]

Candidature of Chile for the Human Rights Council

Chile is submitting its candidature in order to enhance its contribution to the universal human rights system, to share its experience and to help to strengthen respect for all human rights.

Commitments fulfilled

In 2009, when it submitted its universal periodic review, Chile extended a standing invitation to the Human Rights Council mechanisms as evidence of an open and transparent policy.

At the national level, the National Human Rights Institute was established on 10 December 2009 in accordance with the Paris Principles and is now operational.

Our human rights focus

Our international commitment to the promotion and defence of human rights is not limited to the various international forums in which Chile participates but is also reflected in the numerous actions and policies which Chile, implementing the instruments provided by the international system, has adopted to help vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially children, women, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and the elderly. These actions have improved public institutions in this sector, ensuring better protection of the rights of our citizens and improving Chileans' living conditions.

This conviction has led us to become a party to the main international human rights treaties.

Main achievements of Chile within the Council, 2008-2011

In June 2009, Chile was elected as Vice-President of the Council for one year to represent its regional group.

In May 2009, Chile submitted its universal periodic report, which included input from various Chilean non-governmental organizations. That report focused on three main areas: completing our democratic transition; seeking truth, justice and reparation in relation to the human rights violations of the past; and laying the foundations for a more equitable social market economy with a strong emphasis on social matters.

Women's rights

Women's rights are particularly important in our foreign policy and Chile has played an active role in the promotion of women's human rights. For over a decade, we have sponsored the Commission on Human Rights resolution on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system. When last submitted,

in 2007, it was adopted by consensus and sponsored by over 70 countries from all regions. The resolution mainstreamed gender throughout the United Nations, especially in the Human Rights Council and treaty bodies.

In the context of that resolution, we recently organized a series of panels on the topic of women's rights, including:

- The panel on gender mainstreaming in the work of the Special Rapporteurs (September 2008)
- The panel on gender mainstreaming in the universal periodic review (September 2009)
- During the fourteenth session of the Human Rights Council (2010), the panel on empowering women through education, organized jointly by Chile and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- During the fifteenth session of the Council (24 September 2010), the panel on integrating a gender perspective in the work of the Council: lessons learned, shortcomings and future challenges, organized jointly by Chile and the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and advancement of women; our contribution included a review of the challenges and progress as regards gender mainstreaming in the multilateral system and specifically in human rights bodies.

Together with Estonia, Chile facilitated Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/12 entitled "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system", emphasizing the recognition of the equality of women and girls in terms of dignity and the full enjoyment of their rights.

From its election in 2007 to date, Chile has been one of five members of the Consultative Committee of the United Nations Development Fund for Women, now part of UN-Women. On that Committee, Chile has represented the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and has succeeded in obtaining regular funding for the regional offices in Latin America and the Caribbean.

With a long tradition of support for system-wide coherence, Chile has supported since 2006 the establishment of the new gender architecture, UN-Women, and has contributed actively to negotiations on it by organizing supporting side events designed to achieve the consensus that finally brought to fruition the decision to create the entity.

Chile has also worked hard to achieve progress in the prevention and social and criminal punishment of gender-based violence. It was one of the original sponsors of General Assembly resolution 61/143 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, and is currently a member of the Group of Friends of that resolution promoting the activities of the system to eliminate that scourge.

Chile was the first Latin American country to have an action plan for implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, which provides for comprehensive and cross-cutting measures to protect women and girls in armed conflict and encourage their participation in processes of peacebuilding and democracy rebuilding.

Chile has been a tireless promoter of the right to health and the attainment of Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5. Our country sponsored the global campaign for the health-related Goal, entitled "Deliver Now for Women and Children", and organized and co-hosted the presidential event on Goals 4 and 5, entitled "Commitment to Progress for Mothers, Newborns and Children", held in New York on 25 September 2008. On that occasion, a number of States, agencies, non-governmental organizations and businesses announced new commitments on the issue, thus encouraging the existing global strategy.

In that connection, our country organized and sponsored a series of side events during sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, including "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women" in 2008; "Deliver now for women and children" in 2008; "On the road to ECOSOC 2009: Chronic diseases and women's health", held jointly with Bangladesh and the United Republic of Tanzania in 2009; and "The health of women and men in the Americas", held jointly with the Pan American Health Organization in 2009. Chile is a founder member of the Council on Gender-based Health at the United Nations, comprising member States and civil society.

In addition, Chile is a signatory party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and has been an active participant in its Conferences of States Parties.

With regard to childhood, mention should be made of Chile's ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its endorsement of the Paris Principles. Moreover, in March 2009, Chile co-sponsored a statement calling on the Human Rights Council to take decisive action to deal with the serious health problem of maternal mortality.

Lastly, the Government of Chile is proud that the former President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, was recently appointed as the first Executive Director of the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN-Women. This appointment, made by the Secretary-General, recognized her outstanding career in defending and promoting the rights of women, and particularly her position as the first woman President of the Republic of Chile.

Efforts to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Chile participated actively as a member of the bureau of the Preparatory Committee for the 2001 Durban World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, at which it was one of the Vice-Presidents. Before that, in December 2000, Chile had hosted the Regional Conference of the Americas in preparation for the 2001 Durban World Conference.

In our region, we played an active part in the Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean Preparatory to the Durban Review Conference, held in Brasilia from 17 to 19 June 2008. Subsequently, at the Durban Review Conference (held from 20 to 24 April 2009), we helped to promote consensus, as was amply reflected in the negotiating process for the outcome document, in which we included the topics of discrimination and violence against women.

Our commitment to human rights is also reflected in a strong commitment to protect the identity of our indigenous peoples. With that goal, we are seeking to

pursue a comprehensive policy to enhance, disseminate and recognize their contribution to our country's multicultural heritage.

Since 1993, Chile has had an indigenous act broadly based on International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. A constitutional reform embodying constitutional recognition of our indigenous peoples is also being considered in the legislature. Since 15 September 2009, ILO Convention No. 169 has been fully enforceable in our country. In accordance with its provisions, on 1 September Chile presented a first report on the implementation of the Convention to the relevant ILO bodies.

In addition, we have traditionally supported the development of indigenous rights internationally and the relevant monitoring mechanisms. For example, in 2007, in the Human Rights Council and then in the General Assembly, we voted in favour of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people visited Chile in 2003 and 2009 and we have always had a constructive and cooperative relationship with him.

Procedure for review of the Council

Another relevant issue in that connection is the review procedure of the Human Rights Council, as required in General Assembly resolution 60/251. Our position in that regard is that the reviews, to be conducted in New York and Geneva to discuss the work and functioning of the Council, should be coordinated with transparent and expeditious sharing of information.

Our position as a State has always been to strengthen the Council, since we are convinced that human rights are of the greatest importance and relevance.

Chile has participated actively in the meetings and informal working groups established to deal with that issue at the four brainstorming meetings on the strengthening of the Council held in Mexico City (October 2009), Paris (January 2010), Rabat (May 2010) and Seoul (July 2010). On those occasions, we stressed the importance of improving the Council's working methods. We also stressed the need for it to be a principal organ of the United Nations system and for the review process to be conducted using transparent, inclusive and open procedures, with the participation of non-governmental organizations, the Council's special procedures and the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system.

Challenges and goals to be met in the Council

We believe that, as part of the Council's action, there can and must be a strengthening of the procedures for the early warning of and response to situations of mass violations of human rights in a particular State, including special sessions, on-site visits and stronger resolutions on such countries.

As a member of the Council, we shall continue to strive for improvements in the system of human rights protection, contributing our experience to make the Council's action more efficient, so that it will be in a position to effectively protect the victims of human rights violations, in the ongoing task of making the world more fair, free and democratic.

In that context, the members and observers of the Human Rights Council are working for dialogue and cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights. We shall urge international institutions, and in particular the Human Rights Council, which is perhaps the most important organ dealing with the subject in the system, to perform their functions in the most efficient and effective manner, to make a real difference in the field.

Final message

This is the message of our country, which restored its democratic institutions over 20 years ago with maturity and without violence. It is addressed to the international community from a corner of the world where a dignified and multicultural people are facing natural, economic, political and cultural challenges with integrity and solidarity, respecting the fundamental rights of each and every one of its citizens.

The message from the State of Chile is a message of firm commitment to human rights and to the work of the international institutions dealing with their promotion and defence. This commitment is born of Chile's own experience and its trust in a better global future.